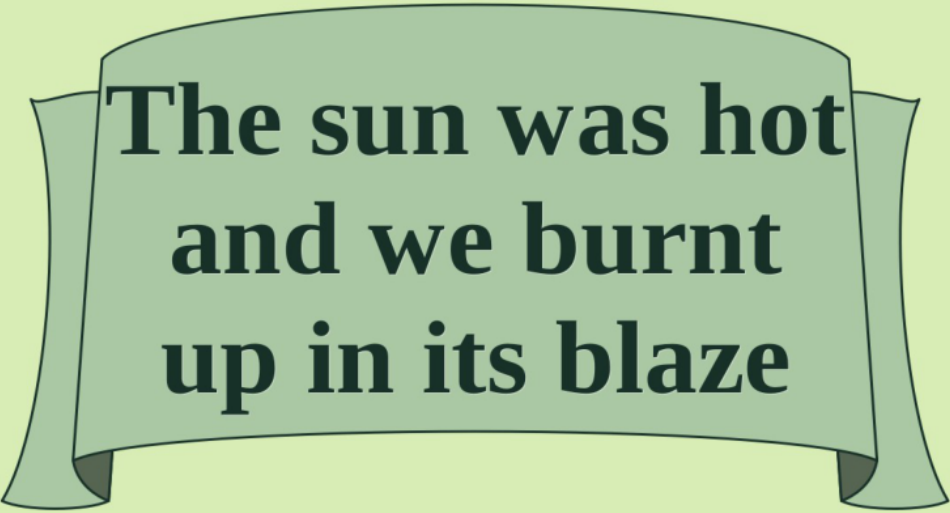




**The sun was hot
and we burnt
up in its blaze**

ToshiChan

The sun was hot and we burnt up in its blaze by ToshiChan

Category: IT (2017), IT - Stephen King

Genre: AU-No Pennywise, Angst, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Canon-Typical Violence, Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Fluff, Found Family, Friendship, Gen, Homophobia, Hurt/Comfort, Mental Health Issues, Minor Character Death, Nightmares, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Georgie Denbrough, Henry Bowers, Mike Hanlon, Patrick Hockstetter, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: Ben Hanscom & Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough & Stanley Uris, Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2017-09-28

Updated: 2017-11-01

Packaged: 2020-01-30 20:44:06

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings, No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 7

Words: 17,647

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

In a universe where Pennywise doesn't exist, things still go wrong for the kids. Summer leaves no one unharmed.

A series about the Loser's experiencing a summer without Pennywise, only everything still goes to shit.

1. Bill Denbrough tries to cope

Author's Note:

Bill Denbrough tries and fails to cope with the death of Georgie.

Summer came and brought with it a sense of relief. Gone was the dreary weather that had haunted them all spring, raindrops sliding down windows as lonely kids were forced to remember something they'd rather forget. The sun shone brightly in the blue sky now, and not a cloud could be seen for miles around. School was brought to an end by the final bell ringing out across the yard and students poured from the doors like ants fleeing their nest. Caught up in the rush, along with hundreds of other kids, were four boys, desperately trying to converse with each other even as they were buffeted by other eager kids with little care in the world.

"Think Henry would sign my year book?" Richie Tozier, resident loudmouth and token bespectacled kid asked, referring to the bully that seemed to have a personal vendetta against him and the rest of his friends.

"Don't even joke about that." Sighed Stanley Uris, the tall and curly haired Jewish boy who had little patience for the dumb jokes Richie made, especially when they were directed at him.

"Can we just try and make it through the last day of school without being beat up?" Eddie Kaspbrak asked. He was a whisp of a boy with a severe case of hypochondria and a surprisingly foul mouth if you wound him up enough.

"I think y-y-you're underestimating Richie's power to a-a-annoy people." William 'Bill' Denbrough stuttered his way through the sentence as he did with most, the condition worsened by a car accident as a kid and the recent death of his little brother just before school started up.

It hadn't been a good year for any of the boys but Bill definitely had it the worse. However, because of Georgie's death, Henry Bowers and

the rest of his gang had left Bill alone for the school year. That had left Richie, Stan and Eddie to face the full grunt of whatever torturous scheme Henry had cooked up. He'd taken a shit in Richie's backpack once and the chatty boy was yet to let his friends forget about it.

"Let's just get out of here." Eddie grouched as yet another taller student slammed into him. "Schools are a breeding ground for germs and icky diseases and I don't want to start the summer of stuck in my bed because I'm sick."

The words caused Stan to speed up as well and soon the four boys had stepped into the sun, blinking a little as they adjusted to the light. Their bikes were chained to the rack, just waiting to be ridden and they hurried over quickly. The sooner they got out of there the sooner they could be off doing something fun and less dangerous than hanging around in a place full of bullies that had it out for them.

Richie was teasing Stan about his upcoming bar mitzvah and making his usual inappropriate comments when a shadow fell over the small group. None of them had to look up to know that Henry Bowers had tracked them down.

"Ready for a fun summer?" The boy sneered, backed up by three of his goons.

"Yeah, since your ugly mug won't be around." Richie shot back. Henry scowled angrily and stuck out a leg, tripping Richie over and laughing as he nearly squashed his glasses. One of his cronies stuck out a foot and kept Richie pinned there.

The others groaned. Some days Richie was just asking to get hit. He'd told them it was his face that made him so appealing to bullies but his snarky comebacks were usually what landed him in hot shit.

"L-l-leave us alone Henry." Bill tried.

"Don't even go there Denbrough." Henry produced a knife from his pocket and waved it threateningly in Bill's face. "I gave you a pass this year because of what happened to your little brother but I think

it's time I went back on that rule.”

“I'd say don't be a dick Bowers but at this point I think it's programmed into you.” Richie said from his position on the floor.

“Stop provoking him.” Eddie hissed. “We wanna get out of here alive.”

“I'm gonna make sure none of you enjoy your summer.” Henry brandished the knife, jabbing it close to Bill's nose. “Cause freaks like you don't deserve to have one.”

“Leave us alone.” Stan attempted to help but the words were too quiet and his posture was too timid to be anything but a sign of weakness for Henry to exploit.

“Pathetic.” He sneered. “You know what. If I was related to someone as dumb and stupid as Stuttering Bill who only hung out with faggots and freaks, then maybe I wouldn't mind being dead.”

“Okay fuck you!” Richie yelled and even Stan was angry enough to scream exactly what he thought of Henry Bowers.

“Bill, don't listen to him.” Eddie said quietly.

Bill barely registered the words. He was miles away in fact, mind racing back to that rainy day that he let Georgie go with a kiss on the cheek and one last reminder to stay safe.

It was Fall and the rain was coming down in torrents. Streets in Derry had already succumbed to the water and were now submerged. People were worried the whole town might end up drowning, but it had stayed strong so far. Those who were used to such weather knew that it'd be over soon and encouraged others to stop worrying.

On one such rainy day, Bill's little brother Georgie came to him and asked for a paper boat that he could sail in the gutters. Bill, who'd been sick in bed for the last few weeks, was happy to oblige. He loved George with all his heart and would do anything to make the younger boy happy. They coated the bottom of the boat with paraffin so it would float and Bill

wrote 'SS Georgie' on it.

"It's awesome!" Georgie crowed.

"She, Georgie." Bill corrected, stutter barely there as it never was when he was with his brother. "All b-boats are called she."

"Wow." Georgie was at the age where any new and out there information was as valuable as gold to him. He cradled the boat to his chest and looked up at Bill with wide, excited eyes. "Thanks Bill. You're the best brother ever."

Suddenly overcome with emotion (Bill would blame his sickness on it later) Bill leaned over and kissed Georgie on the cheek. "Be careful." He instructed. "You don't want to slip and fall."

"Of course." Georgie grinned. "I'll be super careful."

He headed for the door, pausing only to give Bill a quick wave. And that was the last time Bill ever saw his little brother alive.

Georgie slipped while chasing his boat and was sucked down into the sewers where his body was thrown through ice cold raging water. He drowned, everybody said. Only they never found the body, just a waterlogged shoe and his raincoat which the coroner said had been tugged free from him due to the force of the water. They only knew he'd slipped and fallen because an old lady had seen it and called the police. Only she was too late.

They buried an empty coffin two weeks later and Bill stuttered the entire way through his eulogy and then some more at the wake. People gave him sympathetic hugs and offered condolences that sounded fake in Bill's ears. He cried that night, thinking of the empty bedroom that Georgie should have been sleeping in. He blamed himself. He'd been too sick to keep his little brother safe and now he was dead.

"Take it back!" Richie's angry voice snapped him back to present day. Bill was barely aware of the tears trickling down his face. He was instead, more aware of the burning hot anger that was seething through him. How dare Henry say such a fucking thing?! He had no

right to bring Georgie into his bullying. He was dead for fuck's sake.

He was dead and he wasn't coming back. Never again would Bill and Georgie sit for hours and make lame jokes that had them laughing so hard they could barely breathe. Never again would they play hide and seek throughout the house, daring each other to hide in the basement and chickening out at the last second. Never again would they go to the fair and eat fairyfloss and go on spinning rides over and over again until they wanted to puke. Never again would Bill get to hold Georgie in his arms and tell him everything was going to be just fine.

"You're the best brother ever."

"FUCK YOU!" Bill roared and he lunged at Henry, knocking the knife out of his hand. Both boys hid the floor, rolling over each other, scratching and biting. Bill jabbed an elbow into Henry's neck and Henry kned him in the groin. Both wheezed in pain but kept on fighting.

Eddie was yelling in the background and Stan was frozen in fear. The guy keeping Richie pinned to the ground jumped in to help Henry, allowing Richie to scramble to his feet and join the others in watching Bill try to take down the guy who'd just insulted his dead little brother.

"Take it back!" Bill yelled, hands pulling at Henry's stupid mullet. "Take it the fuck back now!"

Henry had no right to say such a thing. He had no idea what Bill was going through at the moment, all because he'd let his brother go play out on the streets when they'd been warned all week about potential flooding and the risk of drowning. Bill had been trying to cope with what had happened all year and now Henry had to go and be a fucking dick because when wasn't he.

"Never." Henry hacked up a ball of saliva and spat, narrowly missing Bill's face.

"He's dead! You fucker he's dead. You can't say shit about him!" Bill knew he was sobbing but he didn't care. Georgie was dead and there

was no way he was going to play nice and let Henry say shit about him.

Of course the moment that Bill had actually retaliated against the bullying was the moment a couple of teachers came over, angrily demanding that the fight be broken up right now. Henry's buddies pulled him away while Stan helped Bill to his feet.

"What's going on here?" The first teacher demanded, something Bill recognised as a twelfth grade maths teacher. He certainly had the asshole attitude for the job.

"Patrick attacked Richie and then Henry insulted Bill's little brother." Eddie garbled around his Ventolin which he was using despite not being the one in the fight.

"Fighting is not tolerated at this school." The second teacher frowned. She was less familiar but Bill thought he might have seen her in the art room once or twice.

"They started it. We were just defending ourselves." Richie growled. "They always start it and you only get involved when we start hitting back."

"It is the last day of school and you are just asking for summer detention right now." The maths teacher gave Richie an unimpressed look. "I don't care what happened. Just stop fighting like cats and dogs and get over it."

"He insulted my dead brother!" Bill yelled. "And you're j-just going to i-i-ignore that?"

"There's no proof he did." The woman's expression softened but that didn't stop Bill from being angry at her.

"Bullshit." He spat and took pleasure in watching her mouth drop open. "Come on guys. They've never helped us b-b-before, they're not g-g-gonna start now."

He swung a leg over his trusty bike and pedalled off before the teachers could stop him. He could hear the rusty squeaks of Richie's bike and Eddie's wheezing close behind him and knew that Stan

would surely be close by as well.

Together, the four rode off towards the Barrens, a weird name for a place with such overgrowth. Bill hadn't been able to stop crying and now he tilted his head back and screamed his anger and sadness at the sky. Everything sucked and it wasn't fair.

Why did Georgie have to die? Why had he been left behind?

"Bill. Get off the bike." Stan ordered. "Get off before you fall off and hurt yourself."

Bill obeyed him all too abruptly, braking violently and attempting to leap off the bike. He crashed to the ground, banging his knee and scraping his palms in the process. There he lay, sobbing loudly as his three friends stood around him and watched.

"Henry's a dick." Stan said finally. "What he said wasn't true. Georgie loved you Bill."

Bill tried to find the words to answer but he couldn't. He sat up and wiped at his face. Eddie shuddered and pulled some antibacterial wipes from his fanny pack.

"Can I?" He asked softly, reaching out for Bill. Reluctantly, Bill nodded. With a gentle touch, Eddie wiped Bill's hands until they were clean and didn't hurt as much.

"I..." Bill stopped, staring up at his three friends. "Thanks. For b-b-b-being here f-f-f-for me."

"We got your back." Richie grinned and made a fist. "Say the word and Henry's history."

"I seem to remember him taking you down pretty easily today." Stan said dryly.

"Not as easily as I took down your mum!" Richie cackled. Nobody else laughed. "Sorry. Not the time."

Bill looked down at the raw red scrapes on his hands and thought about what Georgie's last moments alive would've felt like. He had

probably been scared, and in pain and cold. He might have even screamed for help but nobody heard him.

Nobody found him.

“I know what I’m going to do this summer.” Bill tore his gaze away from his hands.

“Spend every second in the arcade?” Richie suggested.

“Go bird watching with me?” Stan asked hopefully.

“Finally see that therapist my mum recommended to your mum?” Eddie muttered.

“I’m going to find Georgie’s body.” Bill stood up. “I’m not going to let my little brother rot in some sewer.”

And the sun shone brightly above them, burning the concrete and sending shimmery waves of heat rising through the air. School was over and summer had begun. Bill had no idea what was in store for him.

None of them did.

The sun was hot and he burnt up in its blaze.

2. Stanley Uris worries about things

Summary for the Chapter:

Stan tries to reject religion as his OCD gets worse and worse and Bill slowly goes off the rails.

Stanley Uris was a simple boy who loved summer for the simple fact that he got to see a lot more birds out and about than he usually would. With the sun shining and the wind barely there, birds felt a lot more confident out in the open and Stan got to lap up every moment of it. He would carry around his bird watching book and a pair of binoculars everywhere he went, and was even considering getting a camera so he could take the odd photo.

Unfortunately, this summer didn't seem to be heading in its usual direction of bird watching and hanging out with his friends.

Bill was hell-bent on finding his brother Georgie's body and had already shown Stan the hamster pipe tunnel system he'd set up to try and track where Georgie might have been swept out during the flood. Stan had a feeling that Bill's dad wouldn't approve of what he was doing but Bill was too stubborn to be convinced to let it go. Stan hadn't even bothered to try. Bill hadn't been the same since his brother's death and if this was going to help him, then maybe he should do it. Stan didn't have to like it though.

Richie and Eddie hadn't come up with any of their schemes that Stan would want no part in but the Jewish boy bet that it would only be a matter of time before they did. Paranoid as Eddie could be, once paired with Richie, the two could whip up a whole lot of trouble. True, most of it was caused by Richie dragging Eddie along to do stupid things but Eddie couldn't claim to be free of fault when he clearly enjoyed being with his loudmouth friend. He would deny it of course, but a blind man could tell how much the two enjoyed each other's company. So Stan was expecting that at some stage they'd cause some shit and he'd be forced to try and fix it.

The main thing that was blocking Stan from enjoying his holidays however, was not friends off to cause trouble, but his upcoming bar

mitzvah. His father was the rabbi of their synagogue and determined that everything would go off without a hitch. He was certain that Stan would be the talk of the entire community for being perfect in practically every way. The only thing was, Stan wasn't particularly religious and didn't like studying the Torah. He kept stumbling over his words when he practiced and his dad kept getting angrier and angrier.

The angrier Stan's dad got, the worse Stan's OCD grew.

Stan had been diagnosed when he was eight and it certainly hadn't made him feel better about the odd things he felt compelled to do. Sure he had an answer now, but it wasn't the answer he'd wanted. His mum tried to be understanding and his dad drove him to the odd therapy session when he had them. Stan was glad for their support but he knew that they didn't really get it. He couldn't blame them. He didn't exactly get it either.

OCD could be so many things and for Stan, it meant a fear of being dirty and an intense worry when things were out of place. Apparently it wasn't as bad as it could have been, according to his therapist. But there were definitely some days when it felt so bad Stan could barely think straight. He'd wake from horrible nightmares that left him sweaty and gasping for air. He'd scrub his hands over and over again, feeling like Eddie as he rubbed until they were red. He'd look at himself in the mirror and pick out every single flaw and thing that he felt didn't belong.

He didn't belong.

Being with his friends made him feel better.

And so one day, when his dad had yelled at him for messing up yet again, and when he'd had to walk past the fucking creepy painting of the lady in the office again and again, a trembling wreck as he took in its crooked position on the wall, he took off without telling either of his parents where he was going. Stan was sure he'd regret it later but he was sick of everything. It was too much. He knew he'd probably find the others down at the Barrens and headed there on his bike, keeping an eye out for any interesting birds as he did.

He watched a simple swallow dance across the dizzyingly blue sky and tracked its movements until it was lost to him. He unconsciously reached a hand up to his face and felt phantom scars there, lurking beneath the skin. Could his friends see how damaged he was?

Stan eventually found them where he'd thought he would. Richie and Eddie were jabbing at each other with sticks while Bill poked around the wide entrance to a drain and Stan felt dread plunk itself down in his stomach, heavy and nauseating. Bill was looking for Georgie's body in a place that had become somewhat of a hideout for them a sanctuary, a place where they could be safe. What if they really did find Georgie's body floating in a ditch somewhere? What would they do then?

"Hey guys." Stan said, getting everyone's attention as he flicked his stand down and propped his bike up.

"What's up, Stan the man!" Richie waved his arm around, the one holding the stick so Eddie had to duck and dodge to avoid getting hit.

"What're you guys doing down here?" Stan asked, fully aware that he knew the answer. He wanted to hear it from Bill though.

"I w-w-worked out that Georgie's body might have w-w-washed up here." Bill didn't even turn around to look at Stan and the boy would be lying if he said that it didn't hurt.

"He dragged us along." Eddie grumbled, dropping his stick when Richie's hit it too hard and it broke in two.

"Why didn't you get me?" Stan said, really feeling hurt now. Sure, he didn't like Bill's plan and he certainly didn't want to see a dead body but they were supposed to be best friends. Best friends didn't leave their best friends out of stuff.

"I figured you were b-b-busy with you b-b-bar mitzvah." Bill shrugged. Stan crossed his arms. He and Bill had been friends since forever. It wasn't fair for him to make assumptions and leave Stan behind, especially when he knew how miserable the upcoming ceremony made Stan feel.

Bill produced a flashlight from his pocket and climbed into the drain. Stan shuddered, just thinking of all the disgusting stuff floating around in there. How was Bill not afraid of what he might find? Stan was suddenly filled with the overwhelming urge to run at Bill and pull him out of the drain. Bill might've thought he knew what he was doing but how was he going to react if he did find Georgie's body? It had been so long since Georgie had died. The body they found would no longer resemble the brother Bill had loved so much. There would be no recovering from that kind of trauma.

"Bill wait!" Stan called, before Bill could go any further. "Please don't go in there. Tell the police and let them look."

"N-no way." Bill turned to glare at Stan. "The police are just like every other a-a-adult in this town. Useless."

"He's got a point." Richie abandoned his stick and made his way over to the drain. He stepped in as well, the water sloshing as he waded through it to join Bill.

"Don't go in there." Eddie pulled a face. "It's grey water."

"What's grey water?" Richie turned back.

"Shit and piss." Eddie looked even more repulsed and Stan couldn't help but agree. His idea of summer didn't include wading around in water that was more human waste than anything else.

But it didn't look like Bill and Richie planned to come back out anytime soon and Stan really was considering following them. He didn't want either of them getting hurt. Then things would really truly be out of place.

That was the moment that a chubby boy came tearing through the water of the small river that trickled past the drain and collapsed in front of them. Stan was instantly panicking. Was that blood? What the fuck had happened to the kid.

"Who are you?" Eddie jumped back as well, eyes wide as he took in the boys slashed up shirt and the blood that soaked it. The kid was breathing too heavily to answer so the four losers had no choice but

to wait until he'd got it under control.

Finally he straightened up, wincing. "I'm Ben. I was running away from that mullet guy, Henry I think and his gang. He was gonna carve his name onto me. Hence the bleeding."

Stan had to look away when Ben lifted his shirt. His stomach churned and he fought hard to keep the vomit down. He hated the sight of blood and Ben had splashed through a shit ton of dirty water. The wound was probably going to get infected.

It looked like Eddie had the same idea because he was already rustling through his fanny pack, checking to see if he had anything that would help. When it became apparent that he only had the usual pills and inhaler, he turned to Bill and Richie, still fucking standing in the sewers.

"We need to get medical supplies. Get out of the sewer, we're heading into town." It was Eddie's 'no complaining' tone that he rarely pulled out unless things were serious. And when things were that serious, you listened to Eddie.

Richie stomped his way out of the drain without much complaining, introducing himself to Ben via bad joke but Bill hesitated.

"Come on Bill." Stan begged. "Not today."

"But..." Bill stared into the darkness. "What if he's there? What if he's waiting for me?"

Stan bit his lip. "Bill, Georgie is dead. He's not waiting for you. Not anymore."

He heard Ben gasp behind him but Stan's attention was solely on Bill. Bill who had frozen as he registered what Stan had said to him.

"Fuck you." Bill said weakly but his hand dropped and he walked back into the sunlight.

"Let's go help Ben." Stan said, wishing he had the courage to wrap Bill in a hug.

So they biked into town and Eddie, Bill Stan and invaded the pharmacy while Ben waited outside with Richie. They had nowhere near enough money for the supplies Eddie insisted they needed but then they ran into Beverly Marsh.

Stan knew Beverly Marsh only because Derry was a small town and you basically had to know everyone in Derry unless they were new. Beverly had long hair that didn't really suit her and had a reputation for being fairly promiscuous if the rumours were to be believed. Bill and Beverly had acted alongside each other in a play in grade three and Stan, alongside Richie, could never resist teasing his friend about it, quoting the newspaper over and over again about how that sort of romance couldn't be faked.

All jokes aside, Beverly distracted the creepy clerk so they could sneak out with the medical supplies and treat Ben. Stan was more than happy for her to follow them into the alley where Eddie got to work on Ben and Richie hovered around, insisting that they had to suck the blood out. If Beverly stopped Bill from his stupid mission to find Georgie than Stan would be happy.

He'd started the summer thinking that Bill's plan would bring him some sort of closure. Now Stan thought differently. Bill was tearing himself apart and Stan hated that he couldn't do anything but sit back and watch. There had to be something he could do.

Stan watched as Beverly and Ben revealed they knew each other and watched Bill smile suddenly at a joke Richie made. Just like Stan, Bill felt better when he was around their friends. They made him forget about everything that hurt.

Stan though about his house, quiet and dark and lonely. He loved his family, but sometimes you needed more than them. And now was one of those times. So Stan, who hated spontaneity and needed things to be planned out otherwise they'd stress him out too much, opened his mouth and spoke without thinking.

"Who wants to come back to my house for a sleepover tonight?" He said, already regretting the words because the answer he got was probably going to be no. "We can uh, hire some movies and eat popcorn. I'm sure my dad won't mind."

That was a lie. Stan would later spend ten minutes arguing with his dad in order to make sure the sleepover went ahead. It was an ugly fight with his dad reminding him of all the mistakes he'd made and how disappointing he would be at his bar mitzvah if he didn't practice. Stan nearly felt like crying throughout it all, but he won the fight. And the harsh words were worth it because of the responses his friends, new and old, gave him.

"Sweet! Sleepover at Stan the man's house!" Richie cheered. "Snacks are on you though. I'm broke again."

"I'll have to ask my mum." Eddie fretted. "But I'm sure she'll say yes if I take all my medicine and remember to call her once or twice."

"Do you mean me too?" Ben asked hesitantly, looking a little shocked. He broke into a wide grin when Stan nodded, however. "Bev too?" Stan nodded again.

Beverly also grinned. "I'd be honoured to. Can I pick a movie?"

And Bill. Bill looked at Stan with wide eyes and Stan was afraid that he was going to say no and go back to his ridiculous quest to find Georgie. Stan wasn't sure what he'd do if that was the answer Bill gave him. Could he continue to sit back and watch Bill fall apart? Then, suddenly, Bill grinned and nodded.

"Course Stan. Sounds awesome. I'll definitely be there."

Stan stared back at them all, grinning broadly at him, and found himself smiling as well. They were his friends and they wanted to be around him. He knew then and there that they'd never leave him behind.

Would they?

Stan couldn't erase his fears like they were pencil scribbles on a rushed maths test. He had to live with them. There was no other way. He was constantly afraid that his friends would leave him behind. He was terrified of the unknown and of germs and of things being out of his control. He was terrified that one day he'd look over and realise he'd failed his friends. He would risk those doubts though, if it meant

he got to have friends in the first place.

The sun shone down on them and Stan let it burn him up.

Notes for the Chapter:

Ta da! Second chapter! Stan was really fun to write, I hope I did him justice. Saw IT again today with my best bud, which was good b/c I made a few corrections to the fic. Even saw most of the movie this time instead of hiding, though I still swore and screamed a bit. My friend just laughed.

Please leave a comment or kudos if you liked it. It's greatly appreciated and really inspires me to write more. :) Thanks to everyone who has!!!!

3. Eddie Kaspbrak tries to stand up for himself

Summary for the Chapter:

Eddie's used to living a life under his mother's thumb. Why is the summer that everything starts to change?

Every day at perfectly timed intervals, Eddie Kaspbrak's watch would ring out in a loud reminder to take his many tablets. Every day, without fail, he would stop whatever he was doing and down the little capsules. Every day, Richie would roll his eyes but wait for Eddie so that he wouldn't be left behind.

And every day, Eddie felt butterflies take flight in his stomach every time Richie hung back so he wasn't lonely. He didn't know what to call the feeling. He and Richie had been friends for awhile and this feeling wasn't entirely new. He just couldn't put a name to it. It wasn't like Richie made him particularly nervous. When someone draped themselves over you as much as Richie did, and constantly made inappropriate comments about your mum, you couldn't help but be comfortable around them.

Eddie felt comfortable around all the Losers, even the two newest members of their little so called club, Ben and Beverly. But there was something about Richie that made him feel safe when he was scared and helped to wash away most of his worries.

That being said, Eddie worried about so many things that it was just impossible to get rid of them.

And as much as he loved his mum, he knew it was partly her fault that he'd become such a hypochondriac. She was so overprotective that Eddie had moulded himself into the perfect child who tried his hardest to stay out of trouble. He was delicate, according to his mum. He was small and sick and needed to keep himself safe, even at the cost of such things as fun summer memories, doing PE with his friends in ridiculous gym shorts and staying out after the sun had set to play murder in the dark.

On this particular day of the summer, Eddie was having a hard time leaving his house. Some days his mother barely kicked up a fuss, merely reminding him to apply sunscreen and double checking that he had all his medication. Other times she clung to him and wailed that he was leaving the nest too early and that he was going to get himself killed.

And alas, today was one of those days.

“Mum, I’ll be fine.” Eddie repeated, less patiently than before. When had he started to get so annoyed at her constant worrying? It’d used to make him feel happy, lucky to have a mother who loved him that much where people like Richie didn’t. Now he just wanted to get out of his house as quickly as possible. He was almost sick of all the medication he had to take. It was too much.

“I have a bad feeling about today.” Sonia Kaspbrak insisted. Eddie barely resisted the urge to roll his eyes.

“Just like you had a bad feeling about the sleepover two nights ago where literally nothing happened?” He asked, anger tinging his voice.

He was referring to the get together they’d had at Stan’s house a couple of nights ago. Ben and Bev had been there, super happy to have been invited and they all had a great time. Stan’s mum had produced all kinds of awesome snacks and Bev had picked out some cool movies. Bill had seemed happier than he had been all summer and even Richie hadn’t been too annoying. It had been the perfect night. The perfect way to spend the holidays.

And now they were going to go have fun in the Barrens and his mum was refusing to let him go.

“Mum, please. I’ll be super careful. I always am.” He promised. “I have all my tablets and my Ventolin. We’re not going to be doing anything dangerous. We’re just playing around. Normal summer activities.”

“Anything could happen to you out there.” His mum pulled him close. “It’s dangerous.”

Eddie knew she was right. The world was a dangerous place and he was terrified of it. But he didn't want to miss out on spending time with his friends. When he was with them, he could relax. Sure, they teased him about his many, many fears but they also knew when to back off. That was something his mum didn't even know. He wasn't going to miss out on a single moment of being with his friends.

"I'm going out, alright." Eddie gently detached himself from her grip and headed for the door before she could grab him again. "I'll be home for dinner, safe and sound. I promise."

Eddie kept his promise that day. But things were different after that. He just didn't know it yet.

They made their way down to the cliffy area that looked over the river, pale green water twinkling in the sunlight. Bev had yet to show up but Ben had assured them that she'd make her way over eventually. They were mucking around, daring each other to jump in but never actually plucking up the courage to do it. Richie had already tried once or twice to push Eddie in but he'd skittered out of the reach of his friend each time. He'd promised his mum that he was going to arrive home in one piece. Jumping off a cliff didn't sound like a safe thing to do.

"Someone jump in." Stan said, grumpy that he'd skipped a bird watching session just to watch his friends chicken out.

"I'll do it."

They all spun around and saw Bev standing there, already tugging her dress off. Eddie couldn't look away. Bev's fiery red hair that she'd been wearing in a ponytail for the past few days, was now cut above her ears. It was a messy job, probably done by Bev herself. Eddie frowned to himself. What had caused the sudden change?

Bev ran forward and leapt, seeming to hang in the air before she plummeted towards the water.

"WHAT THE FUCK?" Richie screamed after her. They all scrambled over to the edge just in time to see Bev hit the river, creating a huge

splash as she split the water with her lithe body.

It was the only encouragement the others needed.

Bill leapt first, Ben close behind. Stan went next, laughing a little to himself as though he couldn't believe what he was doing. That left Richie and Eddie, both looking at each other as the sounds of the others splashing about in the water below reached them.

"After you." Eddie offered, mouth dry and heart thumping heavily in his chest.

"Nah." Richie fidgeted with his glasses but made no move to take them off. "I reckon if I jump first, you won't."

Eddie started.

Richie was right. He really didn't want to jump. It was such a long way down and so many things could go wrong. What if he slipped when he jumped and ended up bashing into the cliff? Or what if he landed horribly and knocked himself out? He'd promised his mother he'd be safe. If he returned home with an injury, she'd lock him in the house for the rest of the summer.

"What if I need to take my pills while we're in the water?" He said instead. He didn't know why he was making excuses. Richie knew what Eddie's home life was like. He knew all about Eddie's fears. Just as Eddie knew about his.

"What if we do it together?" Richie offered.

"Together?" Eddie asked.

"Yeah, dumbass. It's when you do something with another person." Richie teased.

"I know what together means, you fucker." Eddie felt a laugh bubbling up in him. "Alright. Together sounds...nice."

Richie finally took his glasses off, resting them on his pile of clothes. He reached out and Eddie took his hand, heart beating even faster at the contact. Together, they walked to the edge of the cliff and peered

down at the others, tiny specks against glittery green water.

“Come on!” Bev yelled up, hair plastered against her scalp. Short hair suited her, Eddie decided.

“Hold your horses!” Richie yelled back. His hand tightened around Eddie’s. “Are you ready?” He asked, voice soft.

“Yeah.” Eddie surprised himself by saying it.

“On the count of three?” Richie suggested and Eddie nodded. “One, two...”

“THREE!” They yelled it together.

And then they leapt.

The world stood still for the briefest of moments and then everything started up again.

Their hands stayed connected as they fell through the air, Richie laughing at the rush while Eddie screamed loudly. He kept his eyes open however, staring in wonder as the world flew by in a dazzling array of colours. Richie’s hand was warm in his and Eddie gave it a squeeze, rejoicing at the contact for reasons he didn’t know. For a moment, Eddie wanted the moment to last forever.

Then they hit the water, plunging through it and sinking down. Bubbles brushed past them and that was when Richie let go. Eddie nearly chased after his hand. Instead, he kicked his way to the surface, mouth closed so he wouldn’t swallow any water. He could still be safe, even after jumping off a fucking cliff.

He reached the surface to the sound of cheering.

“Knew you h-h-had it in you.” Bill grinned and Eddie blushed. Bill was someone he really admired and ever compliment from him was something to treasure. Eddie’s mum never told him that he was brave and smart. She told him he was fragile and easy to break.

Eddie knew which one he preferred. He just wasn’t ready to say it yet.

They splashed around for hours, having shoulder war competitions and playing chasey until their fingers and toes were wrinkled. Then they dragged themselves to shore and lay basking in the sun to dry off. The oppressive heat bore down on them and Eddie was glad that he'd the sense to bring a water bottle. His mum wouldn't be happy if he came home severely dehydrated.

Eddie became aware of Bill and Ben looking at Beverly, sprawled out on a rock in her underwear. He saw that Richie was looking as well and felt something bubble up inside of him. He wasn't sure if he could name the feeling. Jealousy? No. It couldn't be.

"Let's go play somewhere else." Stan said suddenly. "A place with more birds."

"You and your birds." Richie leapt at the chance for more teasing. "Is there something we should know?"

"Nah, I think we all already know that you're an idiot." Stan shot back. Eddie snickered. It was great when Richie got taken down by his own tactic.

They all moved on however, Richie and Stan still bickering. As they trooped along, kicking at rocks and running from shadow to shadow, a commotion was heard from across the stream that the river had trickled into.

"Look!" Eddie called.

It was Henry Bowers and his gang, chasing a vaguely familiar boy with dark skin and dark eyes. He was bleeding from a head injury and favouring his right leg.

"Over here!" Bev called out.

The boy looked over and that was when he was shoved to the ground. Henry had his knife out in seconds and pressed it to the boy's neck.

"Time to die." Henry sneered. It was so cliché and yet so terrifying.

Bev acted before the others could. In seconds she had a rock in her

hands and threw it across the stream with deadly accuracy. It struck Henry and he fell back. The boy took his chance and splashed through the water towards the losers.

“Nice shot.” Stan complimented Beverly, eyes wide with admiration. Beverly grinned and reached for another projectile.

“Rock war!” Richie hollered and was instantly nailed in the head with one. He fell back just as Henry had done before and Eddie felt anger explode in him. He was sick of Henry Bowers and his no good cronies hurting them. The rock he picked up was heavy but it flew through the air and slammed into Patrick.

Soon the air was full of the dangerous missiles. Eddie dodged and ducked when he could, retaliating as often as possible. Richie didn’t seem to be too hurt. There was no blood, unlike new boy’s head which was still covered in the stuff.

It was four against seven and it soon became clear that Henry and his gang had no chance of winning. They retreated and so did the losers. Richie hung back for a few moments and Eddie heard him scream across the river at Henry.

“Go blow your dad you mullet-wearing asshole!”

Eddie laughed. Richie never failed to bring a smile to his face, even though he was also often the cause for angry frowns and exasperated sighs. He was a confusing boy. Eddie was often at a loss of what to do when he was around him.

Pulling himself out of his thoughts, Eddie focused his attention on the new kid. Bill correctly identified him as the homeschooled kid who lived on the farm, Mike Hanlon. Eddie instantly decided that he was never going to introduce Mike to his mum. He didn’t want her getting the idea of pulling Eddie out of school to teach him at home where she could constantly keep an eye on him.

“Maybe we’re not the best people to have saved you.” Richie remarked, pushing his glasses up his nose. “Now you’re stuck in the losers club. Nobody likes us ‘cept us.”

“I think I can live with that.” Mike grinned. It was soft and genuine.

The gang kept growing and maybe a while ago, that would’ve upset Eddie. Too many people meant too many germs and too many sicknesses to be shared. But now, he was glad for more friends. He was glad for the support they gave him. There was nothing worse than not belonging. Eddie was glad he had the chance to fit in somewhere.

“Wanna hang?” Bev asked, orange hair burning in the sunlight.

“I’d like that.” Mike’s grin grew.

And so for the rest of the day, the seven friends played a multitude of games. They started an intense game of hide and seek and once found Stan stuck in a tree because he’d thought it was a good place to hide only to realise he couldn’t get down.

Eddie had never laughed so hard in his life.

“Here we have the wild Stan bird.” Richie commentated as Bill and Mike tried to get Stan down. “Often found in precarious positions like this. Be careful though, he tends to bite if you piss him off.”

Stan ended up falling out the tree and squashing Richie.

Eddie laughed the whole way home and all through dinner. His mum glared at him as she set out his tablets, expression stern as she pointed out all the dirt he’d got on his clothes and the scrapes from branches that ran up his arms.

Eddie hesitated before taking his tablets.

That was the beginning of the end.

The sun was hot, even through the window and Eddie found himself burning in its blaze.

Notes for the Chapter:

Uploading this on my birthday bc why the heck not????? Even tho Richie is my fave character, I’m

most like Eddie so I tend to write from his POV a lot.
Hope you enjoy this chapter!!!!!!!

Please leave a comments and kudos if you liked.
Richie will be up next in a slightly different styled
chapter than the others

4. Richie Tozier runs away

Summary for the Chapter:

Richie tried not to let his home life affect what he was like around his friends. He tried to ignore everything wrong with him.

He failed.

Richie Tozier spent the entire evening cleaning his house. He scrubbed the kitchen from top to bottom, finally washing the dishes that had been cluttering up the sink for the past week. He dragged the vacuum cleaner out from its spot in a cupboard and ran it listlessly over the ash stained carpets, knowing that they'd never be truly clean. He wiped the windows and scrubbed the walls. It was a tedious job but one that his dad had asked him to do. And Richie obeyed him, because as much as he knew that his dad would never care, Richie kept on hoping that maybe that would change some day.

"Turn that fucking noise off!" His mum yelled from the living room as he vacuumed the hallway carpet. She'd been drinking all day and into the early hours of the night. Now she was nursing a killer headache. Richie had brought her a coffee but last time he'd checked, she'd let it go cold.

He tried to tell himself that it was her fault and he shouldn't bend over backwards to fix it, but even as he did, he was unplugging the vacuum cleaner and fetching the cold beverage to make another.

Richie laughed bitterly. He was pathetic. Why couldn't he be more like Bev? He'd only known the girl for about two weeks now and she'd made it clear that she despised her dad, and would never do anything to make him happy. The thing was, her dad kept a watchful eye on her. And yet she still rebelled against his grip as best she could. Richie's parents wouldn't care if he dropped dead one day but he went out of his way to impress them.

Well no more! Richie abandoned the cold mug on the sink and left the house in a rush, grabbing his bike and pedalling out onto the

road. The sun was barely visible anymore but Richie made do. He wasn't sure where he was going but he wanted to be as far away from his parents as possible. If he stayed there any longer, he was going to explode or cry. Neither of those were things that would end well for Richie.

Richie had always felt like he had too much energy in his body that would explode if he didn't let it all out. He never knew what to do about it though, except rattle off his thoughts and try to ignore the itching feeling under his skin. He got frustrated too easily and nobody seemed to understand why. Riding his bike helped. It settled him down. But eventually he had to stop. He always did. The thing was, where was he going to stop?

Finally, Richie picked a destination after cycling around aimlessly for ten minutes or so.

Eddie's house.

Eddie Kaspbrak was an odd character but he was also one of Richie's best friends and the bespectacled boy loved to hang out with him whenever he could. Eddie gave him his full attention and that was something Richie craved. He didn't know why but every time he thought of being abandoned, his chest would hurt and fear would flood his veins. Eddie's presence combated the horrid feeling. It was an added bonus that Eddie could dish it as well as he could take it and always rose to the bait unlike Stan.

Eddie's mum didn't like Richie but that didn't bother the hyperactive teen. Doors were for people with no imagination. He'd just climb through Eddie's window and scare him like he always did.

Richie scaled the side of the house with practiced ease and knocked on the window. He could see Eddie lying on his bed, flicking through a chemistry text book. At the sound of Richie's tapping, the boy looked up and frowned in his particular sort of way. Richie could never tell if it was an angry frown or a confused frown. Sometimes Eddie was just unreadable.

Eddie slunk over to the window and opened it, casting a careful eye over his shoulder in case his mum came barging into the room.

“What are you doing here?” He hissed.

“I’m just a prince visiting my sweet princess.” Richie drawled.

“I will kick you out the window.” Eddie threatened but Richie knew he didn’t mean it.

“Move over.” Richie clambered through the window awkwardly, caught his foot on the frame and ended up sprawled on the floor of Eddie’s room.

“Ouch.” Eddie said bluntly, titling his head to meet Richie’s eyes.

“Nothing hurts the great Richie Tozier.” Richie boasted, but Eddie just frowned again. This time, Richie was almost certain he knew what sort of frown it was.

A sympathetic frown.

Great. Eddie knew something was up and he’d want to talk about it. Richie hadn’t come over to have a deep and meaningful conversation. He wanted a distraction from his shitty home life and the itch under his skin that was growing worse by the second. He wanted Eddie to be his friend, not a therapist.

“What’s up?” Eddie broke the awkward silence that had fallen over them.

“Nothing’s up.” Richie pushed his glasses up his nose. “Except your roof.”

Eddie groaned. “Lame, Richie.”

“Not so lame last night when I banged your mother.” Richie said back, almost automatically. The words felt dry in his mouth however, and the buzz of energy that had been humming around him suddenly drained away. He felt tired.

Tired of everything.

“Richie, come on.” Eddie sat down too and Richie rolled over onto his stomach, pushing himself up to mimic his friend’s position. “You

never come over this late just to hang out. Did something happen at home?"

"Does something always have to happen?" Richie's voice sounded small in his ears.

"No." Eddie conceded. "But I think something has now."

Richie paused, thinking back to everything that had gone wrong in his life. It always felt like his fault, because of the things he did. He spoke too loud and lost focus on things quickly unless he really liked them. He was hyperactive, as his teachers said, but he also had horrid days where he could barely move. He rambled on and on and could never seem to stop himself, relying on others to tell him when he'd gone too far. He had no filter and couldn't help what he said. His emotions were all over the place and he never seemed to be able to control them. And there was his intense fear of rejection. His nightmares of the loser's leaving him.

God, he was so fucked up.

"There's something wrong with me Eds." Richie could feel the tears wetting his cheeks.

"Hey, no, Richie." Eddie reached out for him but Richie pulled away. "There's nothing wrong with you."

"Then why do I feel this way?" Richie buried his head in his hands, ignoring the painful pressure his glasses caused as they dug into his skin.

"Feel what way?" Eddie asked curiously.

You see, Richie had never told the others about his 'problem' of sorts. He kept it bottled up inside him as best he could and tried to laugh off his odd behaviour as something quirky that only Richie Tozier did because he was annoying like that. As far as Richie could tell, no one had ever caught on to the whole charade but here was Eddie, offering to listen.

Richie let it all pour out.

He told Eddie all about the weird feelings he got and how easily distracted he could be. He spoke about how hard it was to concentrate and get good grades but he did it anyway in the hopes that his parents would start to pay attention to him. He talked about the incredibly good days and the impossibly awful bad days and how sometimes it felt like everything was moving too quickly, and he had to race to keep up. He touched on how frustrated he got, and how quickly it seemed to happen. Richie even confessed that he didn't really understand personal boundaries as much as the others did. He mentioned his inability to speak quietly and how he didn't always want to say rude things, they just slipped out. He explained how sometimes he couldn't shut up, he just couldn't, or he'd explode.

It was a lot to take in but Eddie just sat back and listened. At one stage he grabbed a large volume off his desk and flipped through it absently, eyes more focused on Richie as he unconsciously turned the pages.

Finally, Richie ran out of steam and things to talk about. He felt raw and vulnerable, regret flooding him as he realised the extent to which he'd exposed himself. Would Eddie hate him now? Because Richie sometimes hated himself and he really couldn't blame Eddie if he decided Richie was too much trouble for him to handle.

It's what his parents had done.

"See?" Richie whispered. "There is something wrong with me."

"Sort of." Eddie nodded and Richie felt his heart drop in his chest. Sure, he knew he was all kinds of fucked up but he'd never expected Eddie to just agree with him. "But not in the way you think." Eddie went on, unaware that he was currently giving Richie a heart attack.

"Whadda you mean?" Richie looked at the book Eddie had been reading. It was some sort of medical text book, with a pale pink cover and black lettering. Eddie had stopped on a page, and now he held it out for Richie to read.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

"What's that?" Richie stared. The text below the title was tiny and

stuck together in huge chunks. He could barely make it out, too blind even with his glasses to make out words that small.

“An attention disorder.” Eddie supplied helpfully. “I think you have it.”

“What?” Richie struggled to register the words. “You think I have a disorder?”

“Don’t say it like it’s something disgusting. Stan has OCD, that’s not fair to him.” Eddie huffed.

“Yeah, I know.” Richie folded his arms. “I don’t get it though. Why do you think I have this?”

“I can’t be sure.” Eddie shrugged. “You need a proper diagnosis. But it sounds like you have all the symptoms.”

Richie recoiled. He needed time to think about this. It was too much information all at once. Was Eddie finally giving him a name for all the things that had bothered him his whole life? Or was it a false alarm.

Richie really didn’t know which one he’d prefer.

“It’s not really good to go through life with undiagnosed ADHD.” Eddie read from the book. “I’m...never mind.”

“What?” Richie was speechless for once in his life, brain numb.

“It’s just...” Eddie paused again. “It doesn’t matter.”

“No, tell me.” Richie nearly begged.

Eddie sighed. “I was going to say that I was surprised that your parents hadn’t taken you a doctor but then I realised...”

“Yeah, you realised that they don’t give a shit about me. They’d never take me to a doctor’s to see if I was even more of a disappointment to them than I already am.”

Richie felt tears threatening to fall again and he stubbornly held them

back.

"If it makes any difference, I don't think you're a disappointment." Eddie spoke quietly, like he wasn't sure if he wanted Richie to hear him.

"Really?" Richie said. "I know we're friends but I can be so annoying, and even if there is a reason for it, that's not really an excuse."

"Isn't it?" Eddie still sounded a little unsure of himself but his voice was growing stronger. "Do you think my hypochondria is annoying?"

"I mean, a little." Richie hated the fact that he could never resist being fucking honest every single time he spoke. It always got him into shit, and it looked like now wasn't going to be an exception. "But I understand that it's part of who you are, and I can't judge you because of things that upset you. I hate the fact that sometimes you irk me. I want to stop feeling that way."

"Exactly." Eddie fidgeted with his fanny pack, lying abandoned on the floor. "I won't judge anything that's a part of you either. None of the loser's will."

Ah. There it was. Eddie had brought one of Richie's biggest fears into the light. He was terrified that everyone would start to hate him more and more until they pushed him away. Rejection...being forgotten...even thinking about that happening made Richie tense with fear. The unknown was such a scary thing to approach and if Richie didn't even have control over his own life, how could he control how his friends saw him?

"I don't want to excuse how shitty my behaviour can be sometimes." Richie whispered. "But I don't want to lose them."

"It's not an excuse." Eddie shut the book and held it out to Richie. "It's an understanding. There's a difference."

Richie sighed. "I don't get it."

"Uh..." Eddie hummed. "Well, when Stan can't do things or gets flustered, you don't think he's making excuses?"

“Course not.” Richie said hotly.

“You understand that he has OCD and sometimes things are out of his control.” Eddie went on.

“Yeah...” Richie knew where this was going.

“Then, it’s the same for you, if you do have ADHD.” Eddie nodded down at the book. “You should read the chapter on it. Then you can decide whether it’s worth seeing a doctor for a diagnosis or not.”

“What do you think I should do?” Richie glared at the book.

“I think you should see a doctor.” Eddie said immediately. “You can get medication and it’ll make you feel better.”

“Then I’ll do it.” Richie pushed the book away. “For you, Eds.”

“Don’t fucking call me that.” Eddie’s voice held no bite, and his cheeks were bright red. Richie felt his heating up as well.

Eddie was a special friend, and Richie didn’t dare to believe that they could be anything more. That was a dream, one that he could enjoy but never indulge in. He didn’t want to stress Eddie out.

“Hey Richie?” Eddie held out a hand and Richie found himself taking it. They held onto each other, afloat in the mess that their summer was slowly becoming.

“Yeah?”

“You’re the best damn person I know.” Eddie smiled and it felt like the sun coming out. “Just don’t tell Bill.”

“For once, my lips are sealed.” Richie laughed.

“Your parents are wrong about you.” Eddie’s voice dropped.

“Yeah, well, they’re wrong about a lot of things.” Richie ran his fingers through his hair.

“You’re incredible.” Eddie breathed. “And you don’t deserve to feel

like you're anything but."

"Aw, thanks Eddie spaghetti."

"Don't call me that!"

Richie laughed. He'd made the right choice in coming to Eddie for help. Sure, he felt emotionally drained after their long conversation but that all felt worth it. Eddie was helping him. Eddie had said that there was a way for Richie to feel like less of a fuck up.

And god, did he want that.

Just as much as he wanted Eddie.

Not that he'd ever tell anyone that. Not even Bill or Stan. No, that was going to stay his secret, for a long time. Maybe even forever. Richie needed to sort other things out first.

But still, Eddie smiled and it was like the sun and Richie burnt up in his best friend's blaze.

Notes for the Chapter:

So this chapter is a lil different bc the others don't make an appearance. They were going to at first but then the chapter went in a different direction. Hope you like it anyone.

Please leave a kudos or comment if you enjoyed this!

5. Beverly Marsh cuts her hair

Summary for the Chapter:

Meeting the Loser's was a sign that things could be good for Beverly. Now was the time to stand up for herself

Beverly Marsh took a pair of scissors to her hair a few days after she met the losers. Her father had ran his hands through it, cooing softly as though it was silk spun by Athena herself and she couldn't take it anymore. She cut through the tresses until it was as short as she could risk it, and then washed it all down the drain. There was no time for second thoughts or regret. This was one of her first acts of rebellion and she wanted it to be a visible 'fuck you' to her father. He couldn't grab her by it anymore and pull her into his arms.

Her hair had been a noose and she'd finally freed herself from it. She couldn't do anything about the invisible ropes that tied her entire body, however. Not yet.

Beverly didn't want to say that the losers were the only reason that she'd decided to stand up for herself but they were certainly part of the reason. With her new friends at her side, she wouldn't be left to fall back on nobody if she angered her dad too much. For her entire life, she'd been alone in Derry with no one to run to.

Now she had Bill and Ben and Stan and Richie and Eddie.

Sure, they were all just kids up against adults in high places of power, but she felt at lot better cutting off her hair as she remembered the sleepover at Stan's the night she'd properly met them all. It had been a fun night and as the hours wore on, the playful banter delved into more serious talk.

"I know we only just really met you guys, but friends forever?" Beverly asked anxiously, referring to her and Ben. "We have each other's backs?"

"Course." Richie said casually, as if it was that easy.

"I mean it." Beverly curled her legs up to her chest.

"Yes." Bill looked her in the eyes. "We h-h-have each other's backs."

And Beverly believed that.

She took off to the quarry the next day before her dad could stop her, rejoicing in the sun on her neck and the curls tickling her cheeks as she pedalled her bike down the main street. She was running a little late for their agreed meeting time but there was nothing like making a dramatic entrance. She couldn't resist teasing them a little when she found them clustered around the edge of a cliff, daring each other to jump.

Beverly took off running, sun burning into her as she leapt high into the sky and then she flew.

It was a pity that she had to come back down to earth, as all things did.

They met Mike Hanlon and Beverly got to nail Henry Bowers in the head with a rock. The act of violence felt good and that scared her a little bit. What if she turned out like her dad? That was a thought that had fear seizing her limbs as she shivered in her bed later that night. She thrown the rock to help Mike, the gentle and kind boy, and yet even when he was safe, she'd thrown more. She'd been so angry, so fucking angry that she could barely see straight. If that kind of rage could take control at any moment, would she end up hurting her friends?

Beverly didn't want to become her dad. Hell, she didn't want to be around him at all, but she had no choice in the matter. Being young sucked. Everything was confusing and no one listened to you. She had no idea what direction her life was heading in. Everything was slipping through her fingers and she couldn't get a tight enough grip to keep it under control.

She'd gone through so much shit in her life and it showed no signs of stopping. As much as she tried to defend herself, and to show the others that she was strong and unbreakable, everything was different

when she crossed the threshold to her house. The darkened rooms and pungent smell instantly sapped away her strength and she became helpless under her father's eyes.

It got too much for Beverly, so much so that she just wanted to break down and tell the others. But she wasn't sure if they'd understand.

She wasn't to know that they all would, and that they'd all vow to protect her, just as she would vow to protect them. Poor little Beverly Marsh didn't know that things would change for the better if she just told her friends. She didn't know and so she didn't speak. And so shit hit the fan in the biggest way possible and she was powerless to stop it.

It started at the Neibolt house.

They gathered there one afternoon, because of Bill. Bill was the sort of leader of the club and he'd been through too much shit lately that nobody could tell him no when he came asking for help. He'd been looking for Georgie's body again and had found an old well located in the creepy Neibolt house that might lead to a blocked off part of the sewers that Georgie could have ended up in. He wanted to climb down there and go looking, but he didn't want to do it alone.

He begged them all for help, and being the weak souls that they were, they all came.

Beverly liked Bill. He was kind and gentle but there was fire in his eyes and strength in his grip. He was a good friend and had refused to believe the horrible rumours spread about her, or so he'd said. They'd kissed once in the school play and Beverly had loved the feeling of being loved.

But Bill was only a friend.

A good friend though, and one that Beverly would enter the Neibolt house for. They all would, no matter how much they claimed otherwise. Even trembling Stan stood there, fingers twitching as he started up at the rotten wood that slumped together to form the decrepit building. Beverly felt a wave of fondness run over her as she

looked at the gathered friends.

She hadn't known them well for long, but she truly loved them. The length of a friendship didn't matter, it was the strength of the bond that did. And Beverly thought she could count on the loser's bond. She thought that it could walk through fire and come out stronger.

Oh god, was she wrong.

It started at the Neibolt house, and that was where it fell apart as well.

Bill led Richie and Eddie into the house, scouting for any squatters that might have been lurking within. It had been decided by drawing straws and Beverly had almost regretted pulling one of the long ones that had kept her safe.

Ben was with her outside though, and that made her happy.

Ben was a sweet kid and he'd risen to Beverly's defence at the creek when they'd thrown the rocks. She liked his earnest face and playful voice. He took himself seriously but he knew when to sit back and laugh. And it was the most beautiful laugh Beverly had ever heard. It felt like darkness couldn't exist in a world with Ben Hansom's laugh.

So they sat outside and waited, Mike pacing behind them and Stan wringing his hands.

"We should have all gone in." Mike said at one point. "What's taking them so long?"

"I'm sure they're fine." Stan said but his tone said otherwise. It was rich with fear for his friends, and Beverly couldn't blame him. What if there was a murderer lurking in the walls of the Neibolt house? Bill, Richie and Eddie had gone in with no weapons or ways to defend themselves.

That was what Beverly felt like every day, returning home to a house where her father touched her and there was no way she could make her voice loud enough to scream for help.

God, why had she let the three boys go in there?

“We could go in and check.” Ben offered, bright eyes meeting Beverly’s. Affection swept over her. This was a boy she didn’t want to let go.

“Yeah, I’m going to.” Beverly stood.

That was when she heard the scream.

...

They all froze for a moment, and then snapped into action. Beverly took off running at the house, nearly slipping on the porch in her haste to get inside. She knew that scream. It was Eddie’s and he sounded terrified and hurt all at once. What had happened?

Ben and Mike were close at her side and Stan was a little further behind. Together they pushed open the door and stumbled inside, dust swirling as they disturbed it. Beverly’s eyes took a moment to adjust to the sudden darkness and still, Eddie screamed.

She couldn’t see him!

She wanted to scream with Eddie, but now wasn’t the time,
Her eyes adjusted and she finally saw what was going down.

Eddie was lying on his back, arm bent at a horrifying angle. He was surrounded by broken bits of wood. Beverly looked up and saw the hole in the roof. He’d fallen through it? Fuck, no wonder Eddie had screamed. He was still screaming, unaware that the others had rushed in. Richie was leaning over him, trying to calm him down.

“It’s alright Eds. I’m here. I’ve got you. Nobody’s going to hurt you. There’s no one here but us. You’re going to be alright.”

“Where’s Bill?” Stan yelled, picking up on a detail that Beverly hadn’t noticed.

“At the stupid fucking well.” Richie cursed. Eddie was still hysterical, though his screaming had stopped.

“I’ll get him.” Mike hurried away. Beverly watched him leave,

wondering who she should stay with.

“We need to get him to the hospital.” Ben said breathlessly. He took a step forward and that was the moment the floor gave way again and Ben’s foot broke through it. He fell, shrieking at the sudden loss of balance. Beverly ran for him, catching his arm and trying to pull him free. He was stuck fast however, and he was crying in pain. Beverly pulled harder. She felt weak, pathetic, worthless.

“DO NOT FUCKING TOUCH ME!”

“HELP!”

Her mind went blank.

Eddie’s mum showed up at some point and when he was gone, Richie flung himself at Bill. Beverly jumped in fright.

“You nearly got Eddie killed!” Richie screamed. “What kind of friend are you?”

“He w-w-w-wanted to help!” Bill yelled back. “It’s not my fault!”

“It’s summer!” Richie spat the words. “We’re meant to be having fun!”

“If you say it’s summer one more f-f-fucking time.”

Beverly tried to step in, but Richie moved too quickly and shoved Bill. The boy retaliated, punching Richie squarely in the face.

Beverly screamed and finally found the courage to rush forward and help separate the two.

Only an hour ago, she’d stood where they were standing now and had seen the loser’s bond as unbreakable, something new and yet stronger than anything and everything. Now it was falling apart around her and Beverly had nothing to fall back on.

She’d thought the loser’s were friends she could turn to when things got rough at home. But now things were rough everywhere and she

was losing everything.

“Stop it!” She screamed but her voice fell on death ears.

The losers turned their backs on each other and Beverly was left to watch them walk away.

She went home and spent the entire night crying, worried sick about Bill and Eddie and Ben. And Richie and Stan and Mike. And herself.

Was it selfish to be afraid for herself?

Beverly had never belonged. Never felt safe anywhere. For a few short days she'd had that security given to her, only to have it cruelly snatched away. The floorboards creaked outside her door and she burrowed further under the covers. Not tonight.

Please, not tonight.

The door creaked open.

The tears came stronger then.

A few weeks past and Beverly hadn't seen any of her friends after the events that had taken place at the Neibolt house. She'd barely been able to leave her home, due to her controlling father. She didn't have anyone's phone number and nobody came calling for her. She was trapped, alone and afraid.

Some summer this was turning out to be.

Beverly wanted Ben. She wanted the young boy with the eager eyes and the golden laugh that made everything alright.

Beverly Marsh wanted a lot of things, and she never got them.

Did she deserve happiness?

No! No more doubting herself. Beverly was sick of it. She hated the life she was forced to live and she hated her dad. He was a sick and disgusting man who used her because he could and never treated her

like a father should treat a daughter. He preyed on her fears and came creeping into her room at night when she was too tired to defend herself.

The losers had shown her that she could be brave.

It was time to be fucking brave.

At the start of the summer, Beverly had found a postcard in her bag. On it in messy handwriting was a poem.

Your hair is winter fire
January embers
My heart burns there, too

The words had struck something deep inside Beverly and she felt ridiculously happy every time she looked at them. They meant that someone loved her, and they meant that her father was wrong about her and the life he thought she'd lived.

The postcard was the main reason she was packing her bag now, to run away. Whoever had written that postcard was always going to be there for her. She was sure of it.

Beverly pulled her backpack tightly to her and headed for the front door. She tried to open it, ready to embrace the sun, but she met resistance. A brand new shiny padlock had been attached to the lock.

She heard footsteps behind her and spun.

Her dad was approaching.

"D-daddy." She stuttered, the bag slipping from her hands.

"Where are you going dressed like that, Bevie?" His soft voice sent shivers running up her spine.

"Nowhere." She looked at her feet.

"You dress so promiscuously, the boys are going to get ideas."

"I've been wearing this all summer, daddy." Beverly trembled. Her

father stepped towards her and pulled her in close, running his hands through her short hair.

“Are you still my little girl?”

And that was when Beverly snapped.

“No!”

“What did you said?”

“I SAID NO!”

She kicked him and ran, dashing for the door only to remember it was locked. He pounced on her, dragging her to the floor. She screamed and lashed out but he held her down, spreading her legs.

“NO! NO!” She kicked out again and caught him in the chin. He fell back and she tried to get up, fell once, then again. He was already recovering. He was strong. She wasn’t. There was nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

He lashed out again and Beverly fell. Her head connected with the wall and darkness rose up behind her eyes. The word faded away and the last thing she felt was her father’s hands on her.

There was no sun, and yet she still got burnt.

Notes for the Chapter:

This chapter kind of feels all over the place because I was trying to fit a whole lot in. Hope it's still good. Please leave a comment or kudos if you enjoyed it, they really make me so grateful.

6. Ben Hanscom writes poetry

Summary for the Chapter:

Ben is the new kid on the block and he's not really sure where he fits in.

Ben first wrote poetry because he wanted to have an answer for everything. Maybe that didn't make much sense. But writing poetry felt like was giving a name to the thoughts and feelings that he didn't understand when they were locked up inside him. It was always a breath of relief when he put a pen to paper and was able to watch everything unfold in front of him.

When his father died, Ben wrote pages and pages of poetry. It didn't help at first, but he kept going because it had to eventually, right? It had to make the pain go away. He hurt all over and the tears wouldn't stop coming and why wasn't the poetry fixing everything like it usually did? The drops fell onto the paper and smeared the words but he just kept writing and writing and writing.

And when Ben first saw Beverly Marsh, he knew instantly that he had to write down his feelings for her in the form of a poem. She extended the olive branch of friendship and he took it tightly, treasuring how warm it felt to be on the receiving end of her smile. He wrote her a poem about her fiery hair and the love he felt, and snuck the post card into her bag after the day at the quarry. She hadn't asked him about it yet but it was enough for Ben that she knew someone loved her. Beverly deserved to be loved and to feel happy, no matter who that love came from.

Ben wanted Beverly to like him. He wanted all the losers to like him. He moved around a lot and had never had the chance to make any proper friends. His weight kept most people away which saddened him more than it made him angry, because Ben didn't like to get angry. Being angry meant you weren't in control. Being angry meant people were afraid of you.

Ben had friends now though, and he fit in with them.

Sort of.

They'd saved his life, helped him escape from Bowers and the others. Ben knew he'd stumbled across something important to the four and yet they led him into town and stole medical supplies to bandage his injuries. Who did that for someone they'd just met? Not many people.

But the losers had.

They did the same for Mike, throwing rocks at Henry and his gang, fury strengthening them and improving their aim. Ben had rushed in to defend Beverly but he found himself throwing the rocks for himself as well. He'd never be rid of the 'H' on his stomach. It would be there forever, thanks To Henry. Ben would never stop being happy that he'd been able to escape before the rest of the name could be carved there.

Ben had friends now. He just still wasn't sure where he fit in amongst them. He wasn't sure if his voice was really needed amongst the harmony they all made up.

They'd been down at the quarry when Ben had really felt the doubt set in. They'd been showing Mike the cliff they jumped off. Ben had sat back and watched Richie try to push their new friend in, only to have Mike sidestep and push Richie in instead. Everyone was laughing, teasing their loudmouth friend. Ben felt a giggle rise in him but he pushed it down. Why did he always feel the need to silence himself? Why couldn't he jump in with what he wanted to say?

Now they were outside the Neibolt house as Bill, Eddie and Richie ventured inside to make sure it was safe for the others to join them. Ben was watching Beverly who was watching the house, anxious eyes waiting for the three boys to re-emerge.

Mike paced around behind them and Stan wrung his hands nervously. Ben wanted to speak up and tell them that everything would be alright, but he wasn't sure if he had the ability to offer them reassurance. So he kept quiet, biting his tongue to silence himself. These were friends that he wanted to keep. He didn't want to say the wrong thing.

“We should have all gone in.” Mike said eventually. “What’s taking them so long?”

“I’m sure they’re fine.” Stan said shakily, voice practically oozing with the fear they all felt. They’d sent Bill, Richie and Eddie in to see if there were any creepy people lurking around. And what if there was? Why hadn’t they given them weapons to defend themselves with?

Why had they let them go in there?

Ben couldn’t take it anymore. Beverly was looking more and more scared by the minute. Stan was tearing his fingernails to shreds and Mike’s pacing just wouldn’t stop. These were the friends he wanted to keep, so it was time he started being someone who deserved them.

“We could go in and check.” Ben said, knowing that even if they protested (which he knew they wouldn’t) he was going to go in anyway.

“Yeah, I’m going to.” Beverly stood up and marched towards the door.

That was when they heard the scream.

Ben may have only known the losers for a few days but he knew instantly that it was Eddie who had screamed. There was a brief moment where the four of them froze, before reality kicked in again and they were speeding towards the house. Beverly took the lead, with Ben and Mike close to her, and then Stan. They all gave the door an almighty push and stumbled inside. Eddie was still screaming. It sounded like he’d been hurt.

Ben’s eyes adjusted to the darkness and he saw Eddie lying in a pile of broken wood, below a hole in the roof. He’d fallen through! Richie was there, trying to comfort him. The bespectacled boy was crying tears of frustration. Ben knew how he felt.

It’s alright Eds. I’m here. I’ve got you. Nobody’s going to hurt you. There’s no one here but us. You’re going to be alright.” Richie babbled on and on. Eddie’s arm was bent into a horrifying position

and Ben's stomach protested at the sight.

"Where's Bill?" Stan yelled. Yes! Where was Bill? Richie was telling Eddie that they were alone, but if so, then what was Bill doing?

"At the stupid fucking well." Richie cursed. He'd stopped Eddie's screaming by now but the asthmatic boy was still extremely worked up.

"I'll get him." Mike dashed off.

"We need to get him to the hospital." Ben said anxiously. He took a step forward towards his new friends and that was the moment the floor gave way again and Ben's foot broke through it.

Fuck!

He fell hard and fast, shrieking at the sudden loss of balance. For a second he thought he was just going to keep going, but his foot was jammed in tightly and he went no further. Beverly ran to help him, grabbing his arms and pulling. He was stuck though, and all she was doing was hurting him. He started to cry in pain. Why was he always getting hurt?

"HELP!"

It took extra help from Mike and a reluctant Bill to help Ben out of the hole and then out of the house altogether. Eddie's mum came to pick him up, calling them all terrible friends and claiming that she'd never let them see Eddie again. Ben balanced his weight on his good foot and tried not to feel guilty.

He failed.

What a horrible, pathetic, friend he was. He didn't deserve them.

Richie seemed to disagree however, instead blaming Bill for the whole ideal and getting punched in the face by the boy during the verbal spat. Ben got it, really. Bill had lost his brother and they'd never gotten the body. He had no closure, no comfort that his brother would rest peacefully in the ground with a gravestone to visit. Of

course Bill was going to try his hardest to find Georgie. But they were all falling apart.

Beverly screamed for them to stop, but it was too late. Everyone was walking away from each other. Ben was losing the only friends he'd ever made and he didn't have the power, or enough compassion to stop it. He wanted to go after all of them, but instead he went after none of them.

He was pathetic.

He was pathetic and he was hurt and he was scared and he was tired.

Was Ben going to lose every good thing that had ever happened to him, one after another?

His mum wanted to know how he'd managed to hurt himself again when he got home that afternoon, limping through the door and collapsing on the couch.

"I fell." He muttered lamely.

"Benjamin." She sighed, drying her hands on a towel. "I'm worried about you. You can talk to me."

"I'm fine." Ben picked at a thread on his shirt listlessly. "It's nothing."

"Did you have a fight with your friends?" His mum leant against the wall and studied him. She'd thought that he'd had friends forever, but the truth was he'd never had friends, not until a few days ago. Had they even been together long enough to call them friends?

"I'm just tired." He said, trying to ignore the crippling self-doubt that was striking him. "I'm going to bed."

"Let me look at your ankle first." His mother started forward but he was up and off the couch and in his bedroom before she could reach him.

There, he lay on his bed and sobbed into his pillow. They hated him. They hated each other but they hated him the most because he was fat and pathetic and liked stupid things. Why had he ever thought that

he could find a group of people who would accept him no matter what? Everything was over.

For the next few days, Ben stayed home. His mum went to work, throwing concerned looks over her shoulder each time but never pressing him for more information. He tried to write poetry but everything came out bad. His floor was littered with crumpled up balls of paper. His mind was consumed with horrible memories. He couldn't stop thinking about Eddie screaming amongst the wood he'd fallen through, or Richie pleading with him to calm down, or Stan's white face as he tried to stay calm, or Mike as he turned and ran further into the house, or Bev crying for everyone to come back.

"Turn around!" She'd screamed. "Face each other!"

Why hadn't he turned around?

Ben didn't think he had a place in that friendship, and so he'd kept walking because he didn't think he had the right to try and bring them back together. That's what he told himself anyway. In reality, Ben was a coward. He'd turned away because he was too afraid that if he tried to keep everyone together, they'd turn on him.

Ben shoved his fist in his mouth and bit down, trying to hold back the sobs that racked him. His body shook with the effort and eventually it couldn't work any longer. He cried, wailed, screamed, fought. Why...why? Why was he so stupid?

He cried for what felt like hours until eventually there was nothing left in him. It had been four or so days since he'd seen the others and that was four days too many. He had to bring them back together. This was no time for excuses, for worrying and for fear. Now was the time for action and though many people wouldn't believe it if they looked at him, Ben Hanscom was a man of action.

He'd start with Beverly. She was the one who'd outwardly despaired the most at the fight. She was strong and brave and had most of the losers twisted round her finger. If Ben could get her to come with him, they'd have everyone apologising and being friends again in no time. Everything would come back together and the world would

stop falling apart around him.

Steeled by his plan, and inspired by his love, Ben grabbed his bike and took off, leaving a hastily scribbled note for his mum to read should she come home before him. He biked through the town hastily, eager to get to Beverly and apologise for running off and not talking to her for four days. He thought he spotted Richie's bike outside the cinema and decided that'd be the next stop after Beverly. Richie had taken a liking to Beverly, not in a romantic way but a platonic and friendly way.

Ben knew that Richie had something going on at home that had sent him in some sort of downward spiral over the holidays, so it'd probably take a lot of talking to convince him to come with them. Though, it'd probably take a lot of convincing to get any of them to come back together. That's why Beverly was the best person to go to first. Plus, Ben was a little biased. He liked her, a lot. Probably even loved her if you could call it that at their age.

He braked almost violently, realising he'd nearly ridden past Bev's home.

They'd been to Beverly's house (apartment really) once to drop her off after a long day out exploring. They hadn't actually gone inside, or even up the wobbly metal stairs that led to the small homes, but Ben was pretty sure he knew which one she lived in with her stepfather. If not, then he'd just have to keep knocking and hoping for the best. The adults of Derry were a rude bunch but Ben was willing to put up with them if it meant keeping his friends together.

He took the stairs two at a time to the floor that he thought Beverly lived on. He knocked on the door and it swung open under his touch. He frowned, feeling a little scared as he took in the lack of light and dust coating the walls. It reminded him of the Neibolt house all over again. If he listened closely enough, he could hear the echoes of Eddie's screams and Stan's quick breaths.

He couldn't hear Beverly.

Ben stepped inside, groping blindly for a light switch and wincing when nothing happened. He tiptoed over to the window and opened

the curtain so he could see where he was going. The inside smelt of cigarette smoke and alcohol. There was something else as well, a coppery tinge to the air that Ben recognised, mostly because he'd smelt it on himself at the start of the holidays.

Blood.

"Beverly?"

He took another step forward and he stepped in something sticky. The sense of dread in him only grew as he looked down and saw the puddle of blood. There were footprints stamped in the edges of the puddle and an imprint there, as though someone had been lying in it.

Ben knew instantly who the blood belonged to.

"BEVERLY!"

A poem he'd written earlier in the summer floated into his mind.

A halo of sunlight

Illuminates your hair

And it starts a fire in my heart

You're as bright as the sun

And I've found myself burnt in your blaze

Notes for the Chapter:

Benny' boys chapter!!! Finally. Hope you all enjoy it. Ben is a precious boy who needs all the love! Mike is up next and then the final chapter.

Please leave a kudos or comments, I treasure them all!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

7. Mike Hanlon isn't sure who he is

Summary for the Chapter:

Is Mike a man of words or a man of action. Or is he both?

Mike dreamt of fire and woke up with the taste of smoke in his mouth.

He woke with the sound of screams echoing in his ears.

He woke from a dream where red coloured his vision and ash coated his hands.

This wasn't unusual for him. Ever since that day when the factory had burnt down, taking his parents lives with it, he hadn't been able to sleep well. He never really remembered what his nightmares consisted of, just knew that the fire was never far from his mind. The dark bags under his eyes were starting to become more noticeable (something that was usually a hard feat) and he was desperate for a solution. He wanted something to take his mind off of everything.

And he meant everything.

The farm, his grandpa, the memories of the fire, the empty and shut up room where his parents had used to sleep. The two gravestones with their names etched onto it and the dates detailing just how young they'd been when they'd had their lives snatched away. The lack of notes from his father on the table when he got back from a full day's work on the farm, telling him where to go if he wanted an adventure. The racist slurs thrown at him from everyone in the town, the absence of friends to have his back.

It was all too much.

Mike liked to think that he was strong and that he could handle himself. He'd tried to pull himself together into a young boy with a bright future. He wanted to be his own hero. But when his grandpa had put the gun in his hand and made him point it at the sheep, he'd

realised just how weak he truly was. His grandpa taunted him, asking him where he was going to end up. Was he going to be holding the gun at the end of it all, or the one facing down the barrel? And unfortunately, Mike had a feeling he knew exactly which one he'd be.

Mike wasn't anything special. He was just another black kid going through life while the world threw its worst shit at him and then some more because why not. When the curtain fell on his life, the last thing he was going to see was that barrel, black hole swelling until he knew nothing else but darkness.

Mike met the other losers during one of the worst moments of his life. Nothing could ever beat that horrible day as he lay in the room at the factory, forced to listen to his parents screaming out for him over and over again until their cries became tainted with their pain and the smoke drove him into unconsciousness. But this came pretty close, because anything that involved Henry Bowers and his cronies was never going to be the kind of memory to look back on with fondness.

The four bullies had cornered him in the Barrens, pushing him off his bike and tearing open his packages of meat he'd been delivering. Henry shoved his face into the bloody carcass of a lamb, knife pressed against Mike's neck. It wasn't a gun, but the silver blade swam in the air and for a second Mike swore it was. Everything was coming back around to get him. He could almost smell smoke in the air, and hear the crackle of flames.

A rock hit Henry then, just as he'd raised the knife to deliver the killing blow. Mike was a little stunned, surprised that a kid as young as Henry had actually been about to resort to murder. He was also stunned that someone had come to his rescue but he didn't waste any time complaining as he stumbled through the water to reach the six kids staring angrily over at Henry. The blood from the wound on his head dripped into his eye as he collapsed in front of his saviours.

He didn't know them very well. He'd seen them around town a bit and knew that Bowers and the others like to pick on them as much as they'd picked on him. Mike had always been alone in his fight against the town bullies but when the girl with fiery hair had thrown the

rock, he'd known that everything had changed. The rock hitting Henry had been the sealing point in their contract of friendship. A full blown war had erupted between them and Mike had never felt stronger than then, with six people at his side who'd purposely come to save him and hadn't shown any signs of regret.

"Welcome to the loser's club." Richie Tozier had grinned at him from behind his glasses.

"Ignore him." Stanley Uris rolled his eyes.

"If you can." Eddie Kaspbrak snickered.

"Glad you're safe now." Beverly Marsh had folded her arms and given him a look. A nice one though. A friendly one.

"They helped me too." Ben Hanscom said almost nervously. "We're the same."

"We've got your back from now on." Bill Denbrough's voice was stutter free as he gave Mike a friendly clap on the back.

None of them made any racist comments. None of them teased him for being homeschooled or called him weak because Bowers had managed to chase him down. These were people who understood the struggles Mike was facing and didn't belittle his pain and suffering. They knew what he'd been through.

They'd all lost their family in some way.

Ben's father had died when he was young, and so had Eddie's. Beverly's mother wasn't around anymore and Richie's parents didn't give a shit about him. Stan faced a lot of criticism at home and of course, Bill had lost Georgie. He'd lost his beautiful and bright brother, with his wide smile and teasing tone. Bill had lost Georgie and he still hadn't found him.

It was the latter fact that had seen them end up at Neibolt house, Eddie breaking his arm and Ben falling through the floor and the losers splitting up too soon for Mike to feel like he'd ever really had a chance to belong.

Mike understood what Bill was going through. He knew the pain and suffering you faced because the person or people you'd loved most in the world suddenly weren't there for you anymore. He knew the grief that hit you when you saw the empty space where they should have been standing. Mike understood. He sympathised. He got it, really. But Mike didn't think Bill should've put the other people he loved dearly in danger. Eddie could've died, or Ben, and then where would that have left them?

Eddie had only broken his arm and yet that had sent Richie toppling over the edge. If anything worse had happened...well Mike didn't want to think about it.

He spent the next four or so days trying his hardest not to think about it.

He didn't want to think about Eddie's screams or Richie's desperate pleas. He didn't want to remember the way Stan's breathing had intensified at an alarming speed, or the sound of splintering wood as Ben plunged through the floor. He didn't want to see Beverly's terrified face swim into clarity. And he certainly didn't want to think about where he'd found Bill, leaning over the well and screaming for his brother to come home, as though somehow he was still alive.

Georgie was gone. It had been so long. Nearly a year, apparently. And yet Bill had been yelling into the well with the belief that Georgie would come running.

And that was something else that Mike understood.

"Mum, dad!"

"..."

"Where are you?"

...

"What are you doing up?"

"Grandpa!"

"Another nightmare?"

"Y-yeah. But I swear it was real. They were right here. Right here!"

"They're gone Michael. It's time to let go. We have to move on."

"But..."

"Gone."

"Gone." Mike whispered into the wind as he drove a hoe into the soil on the farm. "Mum and dad are gone. And so is Georgie. And the losers...we're gone too."

"What're you whispering about?"

Mike turned and saw one of the farm hands his grandfather had hired. He was most likely new, since Mike didn't really recognise him. He looked to be a few years older than Mike, with much lighter skin and a firm scowl pressed into his face.

"Just talking to myself." Mike forced a smile.

"So you're a man of words?" The farmhand grimaced. "It's better to be a man of action. Lot more gets done if you're one of them."

"Being a man of action hasn't really worked out for me in the past." Mike said, thinking of the creak of wood under his feet as he ran into the Neibolt house.

"Well duh. You just try again, then. Cause you're a man of action."

"I thought we'd established that I'm not." Mike dug the hoe into the soil aimlessly. "I'm a man of words."

"Why not try both?" The farmhand cocked his head in some sort of animalistic manner.

"Both?" Mike questioned.

"Couldn't hurt." The man shrugged.

"Guess not." Mike adjusted his grip on the wooden handle. "What are

you doing out here anyway?"

"Just heading home for the day." The man walked away without another word and Mike watched him go.

A man of words and a man of action?

That could work. Mike could reunite the losers. He could be a man of action and use his words to persuade them to work out their problems. Things could get better and Mike could finally have the support system he needed.

They all could.

Or maybe they could turn him away and tell him that he had no right to be trying to fix things, when he'd let them be broken in the first place. Maybe Mike shouldn't do anything. He'd been managing before he met the losers. He could keep managing without them.

The farmhand was wrong about Mike. He wasn't a man of words or a man of action. He was a coward and one day he'd die with a gun pressed to his head.

Ain't that just the way.

"MIKE!"

Mike nearly dropped the hoe in shock. He spun, struggling to regain his hold on it in case he had to use it as a weapon. Ben was peddling towards him on his bike, standing up on the pedals as he bounced across the field. He was alone and Mike knew instantly that something was wrong. The tone of his voice, the sweaty t-shirt, the fear in his eyes. Mike could read it all.

Something horrible had happened.

"What happened?" Mike ran to meet him. "Is it Bill? Eddie?"

Ben slowed to a stop and nearly fell off the bike in his haste to dismount. Mike got a closer look at his friend's face and knew right then and there that it was none of the boys. Only one person could have Ben this upset.

“What happened to Beverly?”

Roughly ten minutes later and Mike and Ben were on their bikes and heading back into town. Ben had explained most of what had happened at the farm but he was still babbling away as they headed towards Bill's house.

“I looked all over her house but she was just gone.” He puffed.

Gone...

“So I came straight to you.” Ben turned a corner, Mike hot on his heels.

“Why me?”

“Well...you're new too.” Ben said, almost shyly. “Does that make sense?”

“Totally.” Mike said. And it did. He thought about how scared he'd been when Ben had come tearing into his farm, but also how happy he'd felt. “I'm glad you came to me.”

“I didn't know what else to do.” Ben admitted.

Mike understood that too. He wondered what he would've done if he'd stumbled across the blood stained carpet in Beverly's house, and found her missing. He didn't know what he would've done know but...if his parent's had been alive, he would've gone straight to them. They'd always known exactly what to do to fix things. Mike knew that he could trust them with anything.

He missed having that reassurance at the back of his mind when things went wrong. God, he missed them so fucking much. Their absence was like a gaping wound inside him that hurt worse than any bruise Henry Bowers could give him. Most days it was a manageable ache, but sometimes it felt as though someone had rubbed salt into the wound.

Today was one of those days.

“What if she’s dead?” Ben said suddenly and Mike nearly crashed his bike. He didn’t want to lose anymore of the important people in his life.

“We’re going to find her.” Mike said, filling his voice with the strength he’d thought he didn’t possess. “And we’re going to find her alive. And we’re going to bring her home.”

“Do you really believe that?” Ben twisted his bike round as they headed onto Bill’s street.

“I do.” Mike said. And he did.

“How can you be so sure?”

“I just am.”

Mike and Ben pulled up outside Bill’s house. An eerie sort of silence had enveloped the building and to Mike, it felt very much like the entire place was stuck in mourning. For a while, Mike’s farm had been exactly the same. But time had passed and it was a place of business once more. For the Denbrough’s, the pain was still fresh. Georgie hadn’t even been missing for a year yet. The house would continue to mourn for a long time.

“Who’s gonna do the talking?” The fear in Ben’s voice was intensified as he stared at the two storey house that hopefully held Bill.

“You, right?” Mike flicked the stand down on his bike. “Just tell him what you told me.”

“You do it.” Ben twisted the hem of his shirt in his hands. “Please. I don’t know what to say to Bill. He’s so...cold. What if he hates me? Please, Mike. I don’t know what to say.”

Mike’s legs ached from pedalling so fast and his throat was dry.

A man of words and a man of action.

That was the sort of man his father had been. He was the kind of man Mike had always wanted to be. And now he had the chance to.

Beverly Marsh was missing. She'd thrown the first rock that had set him free from Bowers and had welcomed him into the friendship group with a wide smile and kind words. Beverly was gone.

Just like his parents.

Only Mike could do something about Beverly. He could find her and bring her home. He could make sure that there'd never been an empty space where she should've been standing. She was his friend and he was hers. There was no way he was leaving her for dead.

Mike sped towards the front door and raised a fist to knock loudly. He channelled the fear inside him, turned it from a horrible feeling that made him feel weak into one that could pass for strength. He knew exactly what he needed to do.

It was time to be a hero.

The sun was hot above him and he let his fear burn up in its blaze.

Notes for the Chapter:

Mike's chapter! Finally! I hope I did him justice. He's such a great guy, I really wanted to capture him. One chapter left after this and then it's over...I think.

Please leave a kudos or comment if you enjoyed this!
I love all the feedback I get!

Author's Note:

Another IT fanfiction? What am I thinking? This should have about eight chapters, with each Loser getting a chapter about shit going down in their lives and then an epilogue. I hope you all enjoyed this first chapter and want to stick around. I'm not good with romance but I might include a bit.

Please comment and leave a kudos if you liked it!
Next Loser up is Stan!